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# Ballads & Lyrics of Socialism

E. Nesbit

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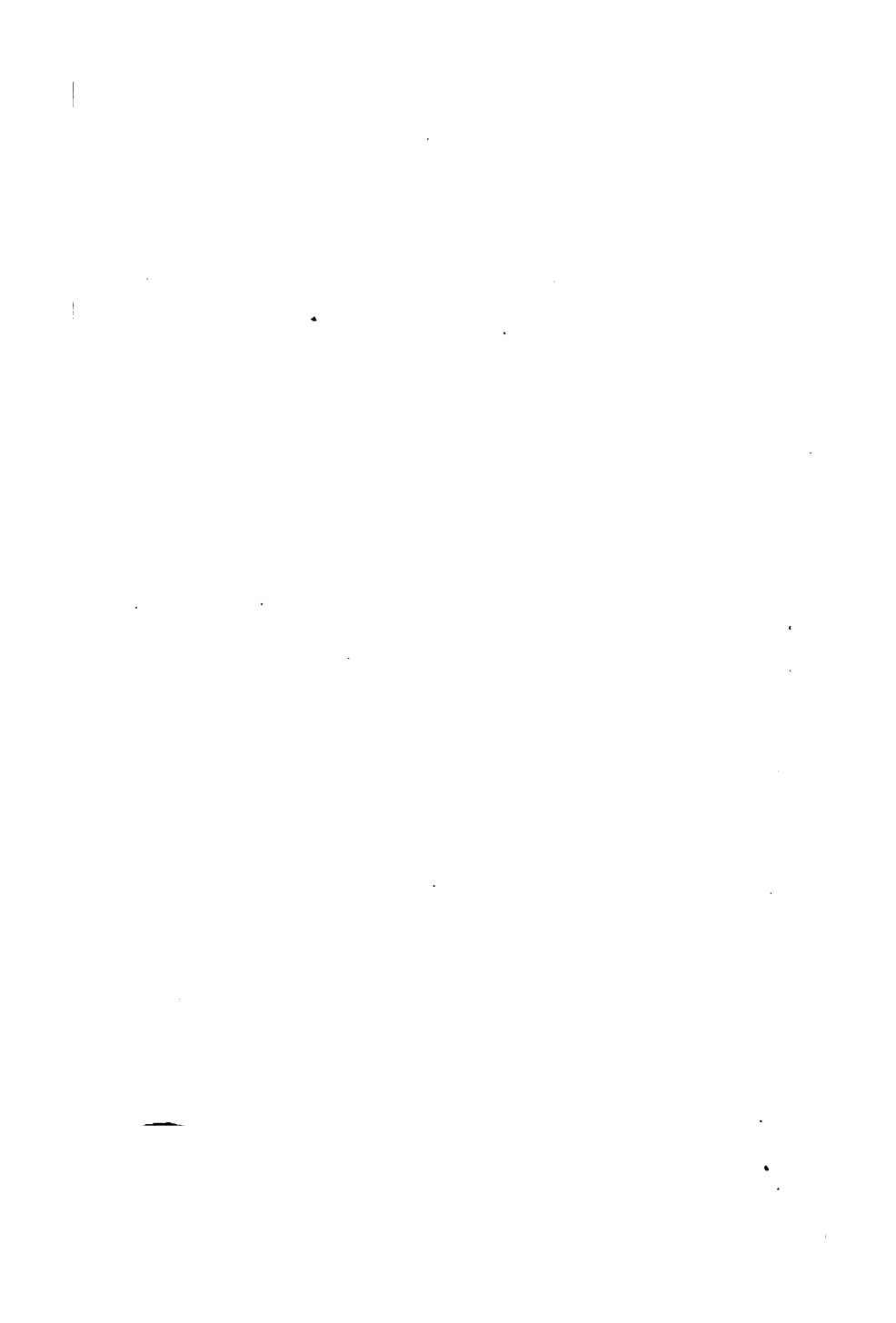


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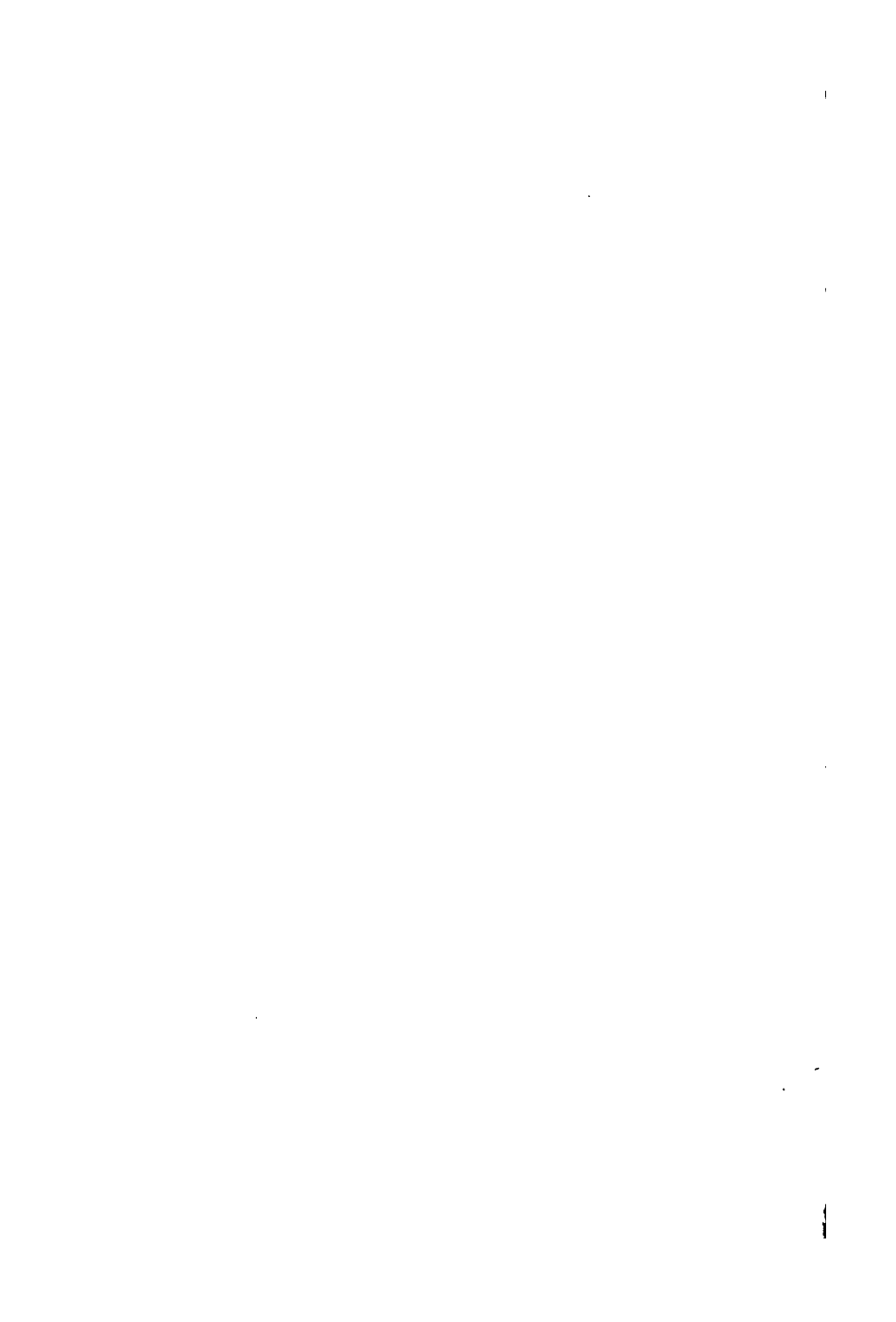
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**Ballads and Lyrics  
of Socialism  
1883-1908**



# Ballads and Lyrics of Socialism

1883-1908

By

E. Nesbit *E. Nesbit*

London

The Fabian Society, 3 Clements Inn, W.C.

A. C. Fifield, 44 Fleet Street, E.C.

1908



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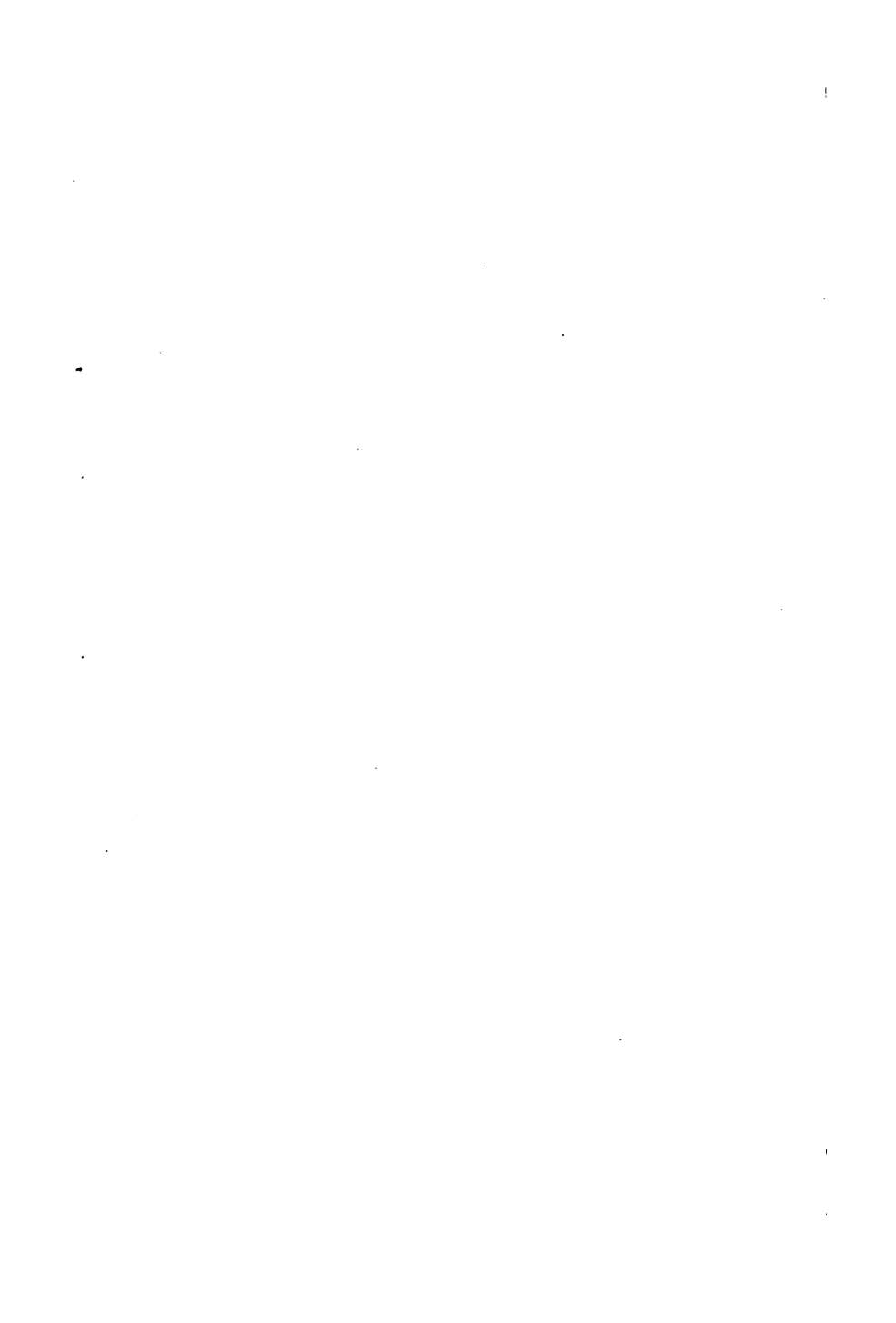
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TO  
HUBERT BLAND

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# Ballads and Lyrics of Socialism

## Marching Song

‘O WHEREFORE do ye stand, a stern and steady band,  
With your feet upon the pathway whence fame has turned away?’

We hunger not for fame, nor heed world’s praise or blame,  
Since fame and honour parted this many many a day!

‘What colour do ye wear—what banner do ye bear  
When you turn your faces fightwards, and make your weapons keen?’

Our banner’s folds are red as our blood which we will shed  
Ere that again be suffered which heretofore has been!

‘Whom, then, do ye befriend, whose cause do ye defend—  
Are there any need such champions and fighting men as ye?’  
Our arms and hearts are strong for all who suffer wrong,  
And a world of woe can witness how many such there be!

‘But the Golden Calf stands high, and all its priests will cry,  
“Ye are heretics and outcasts if ye worship not as we”!’  
’Tis our only boast to-day that we worship not as they,  
And to their cursed idol will never bow the knee!

‘What armies fight for you, O ye who are so few,  
O ye who are so few in a world that is so wide?’  
The Spirits of the Light shall do battle for the Right—  
And who shall be against us, if these be on our side?

1887.

## 10 The Dead to the Living

### The Dead to the Living

Work while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work

**I**N the childhood of April, while purple woods  
With the young year's blood in them smiled,  
I passed through the lanes and the wakened fields,  
And stood by the grave of the child.  
And the pain awoke that is never dead  
Though it sometimes sleeps, and again  
It set its teeth in this heart of mine,  
And fastened its claws in my brain :  
It was hard and hard that the little hands  
And the little well-loved head  
Should be out of reach of our living lips,  
And be side by side with the dead.  
For with trees about where the brown birds build,  
And with long green grass above,  
She lies in the cold sweet breast of earth  
Beyond the reach of our love ;  
Whatever befalls in the coarse loud world,  
We know she will never wake.  
When I thought of the sorrow she might have known,  
I was almost glad for her sake. . . .  
Tears might have tired those kiss-closed eyes,  
Grief hardened the mouth I kissed ;  
I was almost glad that my dear was dead  
Because of the pain she had missed.  
Oh, if I could but have died a child  
With a white child-soul like hers,  
As pure as the wind-flowers down in the copse,  
Where the soul of the springtime stirs ;  
Or if I had only done with it all,  
And might lie by her side unmoved !  
I envied the very clods of earth  
Their place near the child I loved.

## The Dead to the Living 11

And my soul rose up in revolt at life,  
As I stood dry-eyed by her grave,  
When sudden the grass of the churchyard sod  
Rolled back like a green smooth wave ;  
The brown earth looked like the brown sea rocks,  
The tombstones were white like spray,  
And white like surf were the curling folds  
Of the shrouds where the dead men lay ;  
For each in his place with his quiet face  
I saw the dead lie low,  
Who had worked and suffered and found life sad,  
So many sad years ago.  
Unchanged by time I saw them lie  
As when first they were laid to rest,  
The tired eyes closed, the sad lips still,  
And the work-worn hands on the breast.  
There were some who had found the green world so grey,  
They had left it before their time,  
And some were little ones like my dear,  
And some had died in their prime ;  
And some were old, they had had their fill  
Of bitter unfruitful hours ;  
And I knew that none of them, none, had known  
A flower of a hope like ours !

Through their shut eyelids the dead looked up,  
And without a voice they said :  
' We lived without hope, without hope we died,  
And hopeless we lie here dead ;  
And death *is* better than life that draws  
Pain in, as it draws in breath,  
If life never dreams of a coming day  
When life shall not envy death.  
Through the dark of our hours and our times we lived,  
Uncheered by a single ray  
Of such hope as lightens the lives of you  
Who are finding life hard to-day ;



## Two Lives

With our little lanterns of human love  
 We lighted our dark warm night—  
 But you in the chill of the dawn are set  
 With your face to the eastern light.  
 Freedom is waiting with hands held out  
 Till you tear the veil from her face—  
 And when once men have seen the light of her eyes,  
 And felt her divine embrace  
 The light of the world will be risen indeed,  
 And will shine in the eyes of men,  
 And those who come after will find life fair,  
 And their lives worth living then !  
 Will you strive to the light in your loud rough world,  
 That these things may come to pass,  
 Or lie in the shadow beside the child,  
 And strive to the sun through the grass ?  
 ‘ My world while I may,’ I cried ; ‘ but you  
 Whose lives were as dark as your grave ? ’  
 ‘ We too are a part of the coming light,’  
 They called through the smooth green wave.  
 Their white shrouds gleamed as the flood of green  
 Rolled over and hid them from me—  
 Hid all but the little hands and the hair,  
 And the eyes that I always see.

1886.

## Two Lives

I

**O**NE stood with his face to the light ;  
 He held a sceptre of song  
 That ruled men’s souls till they strove to the right,  
 And set their feet on the wrong.

## Two Lives

13

'I am but a slave,' he said,  
'The servant of man am I,  
To sing of the life that is more than bread,  
And the deaths that are life to die.

'And the might of my song shall sway  
The millions who sit in shame,  
Till they cast their idols of gold away,  
And worship the true God's name.'

So he sang, and the nations heard  
Through their drunken sleep of years,  
And their limbs in their golden fetters stirred  
As he sang to their drowsy ears.

Hope woke, in her spellbound bowers,  
And gave heed to each clear keen word,  
Till Love looked out from a net of flowers,  
And called to his heart—and he heard.

And his song rose higher, more sweet,  
As his dreams rose more sweet, more high :  
'Tis Love shall aid me, and shall complete  
The spell I shall conquer by !

'We two to men's souls will sing,  
And the work shall be ours, be ours ;  
Together welcome the thorns that bring  
More fruit than the sweetest flowers !'

But the woman he loved said 'No !  
To me all your soul is due,  
Can I share with a world, whatever its woe,  
My heart's one treasure, you ?

'There are plenty to sing of the right  
And give their lives for the truth—  
But you are mine, and shall sing delight,  
And beauty, and love, and youth.

## Two Lives

'For these are the songs men love,  
These stir their dull brains like wine.  
They hate the songs you were proudest of  
In the days when you were not mine.

'And if for the world you sing  
It will pay you with fame and gold,  
And the fame and the gold to me you shall bring  
For my heart and my hands to hold.

'Besides—what steads it to try,  
One man against all the rest?  
Let the world and its rights and its wrongs go by,  
And hide your eyes on my breast!'

Then the man bowed down his head  
And she crowned him with roses sweet;  
And he laboured for fame and bread,  
And laid his wage at her feet.

And the millions who starve and sin,  
He shut them out of his life  
Where she was alone shut in—  
His ruin, his prize, his wife.

And all that he might have been,  
And all that he might have done,  
These lie with the things that shall not be seen  
For ever under the sun.

His children play round his knee,  
But he sighs as they come and go—  
For they speak of visions he cannot see,  
In a tongue that he used to know.

He sings of love and of flowers,  
And forgets what they used to mean,  
For gold is lord of his empty hours,  
And fame of his soul is queen.

## Two Lives

15

And the woman has long possessed  
What she bade him win for her sake ;  
But she holds with the gold accurst unrest,  
And the fame with a wild heart-ache.

For the light in her eyes is dim,  
Or dim are his eyes that gaze.  
There is no light that can light for him  
The gloom of his sordid days.

He will die, and his name be enrolled  
Where marble makes mock of clay ;  
(Oh, the pitiful clay, made brave with gold !)  
And there let it rot away !

### II

One stood in the way of life  
And said : ' I will serve and strive  
And never weary of strife  
For just so long as I live.

'The sum of service I'm worth  
I swear it, beyond recall,  
To the mother of all, the earth,  
To men, the brothers of all.

'I have no voice for a song,  
No trumpet nor lyre is mine,  
But my sword is sharp, and my arm is strong :  
Liberty ! these are thine !'

So he followed where high hopes led,  
And he paused not for blame or praise,  
But ever rejoiced to tread  
The roughest and rightest ways.

He scorned ambitions and powers,  
Delight was to him but a word,  
Till Love looked out from a brake of flowers  
And called to his heart, and he heard.

Then the man's whole soul cried sore :  
' I am tired of patience and pain !  
What if the lights that have gone before  
Should be but visions and vain ?

' Why should my youth be spent  
In following a marsh-light gleam ?  
Why should my manhood be content  
With what may be but a dream ?

' The sword I am used to wield  
Is as much as my hands can hold,  
I will turn aside from the battle-field  
To the fields where men gather gold.

' For while I carry the sword  
I can hold neither gold nor you—  
And the sword is heavy, and your least word  
Is music my life sings to !'

But the woman who loved him spake,  
She spake brave words with a sigh—  
' Rather than drop the sword for my sake  
Turn its point to your heart and die !

' It is better to die than live  
If life means nothing but greed  
To clutch the gifts that the world can give  
And turn your back on its need.

' And I have my life-work too,  
A banner to bear have I ;  
Shall my flag be dragged in the dust by you,  
Who should help me to hold it high ?

## Two Lives

17

'Hard looks life's every line  
When the colours of love are effaced,  
But death would be harder, O heart of mine,  
After a life disgraced !

'And what though we never see  
Sweet Love's sweet fruit at its best ;  
My children's play at your knee,  
Your baby's sleep at my breast ?

'Only one life is ours—  
Shall we die with no world's work done,  
Having covered our shame with flowers,  
And shrunk from sight of the sun ?

'No ! Be the sword for him,  
Banner of light for me—  
Voice at the heart when the eyes grow dim,  
"Liberty ! This for thee !"

Then he bowed him low at her knees,  
And she gave him the thorny crown  
Which whoso wears knows no rest nor ease  
Till Death bids him lay it down.

And they turned, and they passed away  
To parting, and longing, and tears,  
To carry the sword and the flag away  
Through the cold clean desolate years,

To work for the world, and to hear  
When the long race nearly is run,  
Like a voice in a dream, a voice most dear,  
'Faithful and good, well done !'

And no man remembers his name,  
Nor hers, who was never his wife.  
Their names are written in letters of flame  
In the book of eternal life.

## All in All

WHEN all the night is horrible with clamour  
 Of voiceless curses darker than the night,  
 When light of sun there is not, neither starshine,  
 Nor any beacon on the hill of Right,  
 Shine, O thou Light of Life, upon our pathway—  
 Freedom, be thou our light !

Since all life's ways are difficult and dreary,  
 And false steps echo through eternity,  
 And there is naught to lean on as we journey  
 By paths not smooth as downward paths would be,  
 We have no other help—we need no other ;  
 Freedom, we lean on thee !

The slave's base murmur and the threats of tyrants,  
 The voice of cowards who cringe and cry 'Retreat,'  
 The whisper of the world, 'Come where power calls thee !'  
 The whisper of the flesh, 'Let life be sweet.'  
 Silence all these with thy divine commanding ;  
 Guide thou thy children's feet !

For thee, for thee we bear the cross, the banner,  
 For thee are all our battles fought and won ;  
 For thee was every prayer we ever uttered,  
 For thee has every deed of ours been done ;  
 To thee we press—to thee, triumphant splendour,  
 O Freedom, lead us on !

Where thou shalt lead we do not fear to follow.  
 Thou hast our hearts ; we follow them in thee.  
 Spirit of Light, whatever thou shalt show us,  
 Strong in the faith, we shall not fear to see ;  
 We reach to thee through all the waves of darkness  
 Of all the days to be.

## Ballad of Splendid Silence 19

### The Ballad of Splendid Silence

In Memoriam: Ferencz Renyi, Hungary, 1848.

**T**HIS is the story of Renyi,  
And when you have heard it through,  
Pray God He send no trial like his  
To try the faith of you.

And if his doom be upon you,  
Then may God grant you this :  
To fight as good a fight as he,  
And win a crown like his !

He was strong and handsome and happy,  
Beloved and loving and young,  
With eyes that men set their trust in,  
And the fire of his soul on his tongue.

He loved the Spirit of Freedom,  
He hated his country's wrongs,  
He told the patriots' stories,  
And he sang the patriots' songs.

With mother and sister and sweetheart  
His safe glad days went by,  
Till Hungary called on her children  
To arm, to fight, and to die.

' Good-bye to mother and sister ;  
Good-bye to my sweet sweetheart ;  
I fight for you—you pray for me,  
We shall not be apart ! '

The women prayed at the sunrise,  
They prayed when the skies grew dim ;  
His mother and sister prayed for the Cause,  
His sweetheart prayed for him.



## 20 Ballad of Splendid Silence

For mother and sister and sweetheart,  
But most for the true and the right,  
He low laid down his own life's hopes  
And led his men to fight.

Skirmishing, scouting, and spying,  
Night-watch, attack, and defeat ;  
The resolute, desperate fighting,  
The hopeless, reluctant retreat ;

Ruin, defeat, and disaster,  
Capture and loss and despair,  
And half of his regiment hidden,  
And only this man knew where !

Prisoner, fast bound, sore wounded,  
They brought him roughly along  
With his body as weak and broken  
As his spirit was steadfast and strong

Before the Austrian general—  
'Where are your men?' he heard ;  
He looked black death in its ugly face  
And answered never a word.

'Where is your regiment hidden ?  
Speak—you are pardoned straight.  
No ? We can find dumb dogs their tongues,  
You rebel reprobate !'

They dragged his mother and sister  
Into the open hall.  
'Give up your men, if these women  
Are dear to your heart at all !'

He turned his eyes on his sister,  
And spoke to her silently ;  
She answered his silence with speaking,  
And straight from the heart spoke she :

## Ballad of Splendid Silence 21

'If you betray your country,  
You spit on our father's name ;  
And what is life without honour ?  
And what is death without shame ?'

He looked on the mother who bore him,  
And her smile was splendid to see ;  
He hid his face with a bitter cry,  
But never a word said he.

'Son of my body—be silent !  
My days at the best are few,  
And I shall know how to give them,  
Son of my heart, for you !'

He shivered, set teeth, kept silence :  
With never a plaint or cry  
The women were slain before him,  
And he stood and he saw them die.

Then they brought his lovely beloved,  
Desire of his heart and eyes.  
'Say where your men are hidden,  
Or say that your sweetheart dies.'

She threw her arms about him,  
She laid her lips to his cheek :  
'Speak ! for my sake who love you !  
Love, for our love's sake, speak !'

His eyes are burning and shining  
With the fire of immortal disgrace—  
Christ ! walk with him in the furnace  
And strengthen his soul for a space !

Long he looked at his sweetheart  
His eyes grew tender and wet ;  
Closely he held her to him,  
His lips to her lips were set.

## 22 Ballad of Splendid Silence

'See! I am young! I love you!  
I am not ready to die!  
One word makes us happy for ever,  
Together, you and I.'

Her arms round his neck were clinging,  
Her lips his cold lips caressed;  
He suddenly flung her from him,  
And folded his arms on his breast.

She wept, she shrieked, she struggled,  
She cursed him in God's name,  
For the woe of her early dying,  
And for her dying's shame.

And still he stood, and his silence  
Like fire was burning him through,  
Then the muskets spoke once, through his silence,  
And she was silent too.

They turned to torture him further,  
If further might be—in vain;  
He had held his peace in that threefold hell,  
And he never spoke again:

The end of the uttermost anguish  
The soul of the man could bear,  
Was the madhouse where tyrants bury  
The broken shells of despair.

\* \* \* \*

By the heaven renounced in her service,  
By the hell thrice braved for her sake,  
By the years of madness and silence,  
By the heart that her enemies brake;

## To a Child Reading 23

By the young life's promise ruined,  
By the years of too living death,  
By the passionate self-devotion,  
And the absolute perfect faith ;

By the thousands who know such anguish,  
And share such divine renown,  
Who have borne them bravely in battle,  
And won the conqueror's crown ;

By the torments her children have suffered,  
By the blood that her martyrs will give,  
By the deaths men have died at her altars,  
By these shall our Liberty live !

In the silence of tears, in the burden  
Of the wrongs we some day will repay,  
Live the brothers who died in all ages  
For the Freedom we live for to-day !

1836.

## To a Child Reading

**Y**ES, read the pages of the old-world story,  
Of kings of noble deed and noble thought  
Of heroes whose resplendent crown of glory  
Bound their wide brows, unsought.

But be not sad because their work is ended,  
And they have rest which life so long denied :  
They still live in the world which they befriended,  
For which they lived and died.

## Two Voices

Great deeds can never die : all through the ages  
 Their fruits increasing ever grow and spread,  
 And many a deed unnamed in written pages  
 Lived once—and is not dead.

And, God be praised, man's work is not completed,  
 There still is work on earth for men to do ;  
 Not yet, not yet are all the false defeated,  
 Not yet crowned all the true.

Still the world needs brave deeds and true hearts many,  
 Not yet are all the noble battles won !  
 We too, we too may do deeds great as any  
 That ever yet were done.

## Two Voices

## Country

'SWEET are the lanes and the hedges, the fields made  
 red with the clover,  
 With tall field-sorrel, and daisies, and golden buttercups  
 glowing ;  
 Sweet is the way through the woods, where at sundown  
 maiden and lover  
 Linger by stile or by bank where clematis garlands are  
 growing.  
 Fair is our world when the dew and the dawn thrill the  
 half-wakened roses,  
 Fair when the corn-fields grow warm with poppies in  
 noonlight gleaming,  
 Fair through the long afternoon, when hedges and hay-  
 fields lie dreaming,  
 Fair as in lessening light the last convolvulus closes.

## Two Voices

25

'Scent of geranium and musk that in cottage windows  
run riot,

Breath from the grass that is down in the meadows  
each side the highway,

Slumberous hush of the churchyard where we one day  
may lie quiet,

Murmuring wind through the leaves bent over the  
meadow byway,

Deeps of cool shadow, and gleams of light on high elm-  
tops shining,

Such peace in the dim green brake as the town, save in  
dreams, knows never,

But in, through, under it all, the old pain follows us  
ever—

Ever the old despair, the old unrest and repining.

'Dark is the City's face ; but her children who know her  
find her

Mother to them who are brothers, mindful of brother-  
hood's duty ;

To each of us, lonely, unhelped, the grave would be  
warmer, kinder,

Than the cold unloving face of our world of blossom  
and beauty.

Poverty deep and dark cowers under the thatch with the  
swallows,

Cruel disease lies hid in the changeful breast of the  
waters,

Drink sets snares for our sons, and shame digs graves  
for our daughters,

Want and care crush the flower of a youth that no life-  
fruit follows.

'What are the woodland sweets, the meadow's fair  
flowery treasure,

When we are hungry and sad, and stupid with work  
and with sorrows ?

Leisure for nothing but sleep, and with heart but for  
 sleep in our leisure ;  
 The work of to-day still the same as yesterday's work,  
 and to-morrow's.

Ever the weary round—the treadmill of innocent lives—  
 Hopeless and helpless, and bowing our back like a  
 hound's to the lashes ;  
 What can seem fair to the eyes that are smarting and  
 sore with the ashes

Blown from the fires that consume the souls of our  
 children and wives ?

'Dreams sometimes we have had of an hour when we  
 might speak plainly,  
 Raise the mantle and show how the iron eats into our  
 bosom,  
 The rotting root of the Nation, the worm at the heart  
 of its blossom,  
 Dreaming we said, "We will speak, when the time for  
 it comes, not vainly."  
 Ah—but the time comes never—Life, we are used to  
 bear it,  
 Starved are our brains and grow not, our hands are fit but  
 for toiling,  
 If we stretched them out their touch to our masters' hand  
 would be soiling ;  
 Weak is our voice with disuse—too weak for our lords  
 to hear it !'

## City

'So has the spark died out that the torch of hope dropped  
 among you ?  
 So is the burden bound more fast to the shrinking  
 shoulder ?  
 Far too faint are your cries to be heard by the men who  
 wrong you ?

## Two Voices

27

And if they heard they are high, and the air as men  
rise grows colder !  
Yet you are men though so weak, and in mine and work-  
shop your brothers,  
Stronger in head, and in heart not less sad, for deliver-  
ance are striving ;  
These will stand fast, and will face the cruel unjust and  
ungiving,  
And you in our ranks shall be, our hearts fast clasped in  
each other's !

'For in the night of our sorrow cold lights are breaking  
and brightening  
Out in the eastern sky ; through the drifting clouds,  
wind-driven,  
Over the earth new gleams and glories are laughing and  
lightening,  
Keener the air grows, clearer ; brighter the face of the  
heaven.  
Turn we our face to the east—oh, wind of the dawn,  
blow to us  
Freshness and strength and resolve ! The star of old  
faith grows paler  
Before the eyes of our Freedom, though still wrath's  
red mists veil her,  
For this is our battle day ; revenge, like our blood, runs  
through us.

'This is our vengeance day. Our masters, made fat with  
our fasting,  
Shall fall before us like corn when the sickle for harvest  
is strong :  
Old wrong shall give might to our arm—remembrance of  
wrong shall make lasting  
The graves we will dig for the tyrants we bore with too  
much and too long.



The sobs of our starving children, the tears of our heart-sick mothers,  
 The moan of your murdered manhood crushed out by their wanton pressure,  
 The wail of the life-long anguish that paid the price of their pleasure,  
 These will make funeral music to speed the lost souls of them, brothers !

‘Shoulder to shoulder we march, and for those who go down ’mid the fighting  
 With rifles in hand and pikes, and the red flag over them flying,  
 Glad shall our hearts be for them—who die when our sun is lighting  
 The warm, wide heavens, and sheds its lovely light on their dying.  
 Fight, though we lose our dearest—fight, though the battle rages  
 Fiercer and hotter than ever was fight in the world before :  
 We must fight—how can men do less ? If we die, what can men do more ?  
 And the sun of Freedom shall shine across our graves to the ages !’

1886.

### The Star

I HAD a star to sing by, a beautiful star that led,  
 But when I sang of its splendour the world in its wisdom said :  
 ‘Sweet are your songs, yet the singer sings but in madness when  
 He hymns but stars un beholden of us his fellows of men ;

## The Star

29

'Glow-worms we see and marshlights; sing us sweet songs  
of those  
For the guerdons we have to give you, laurel and gold  
and rose;  
Or if you must sing of stars, unseen of your brother man,  
Go, starve with your eyes on your vision; your star may  
save if it can!'

So I said, 'If I starve and die I never again shall see  
The glory, the high white radiance that hallows the world  
for me;  
I will sing their songs, if it must be, and when I have  
golden store,  
I will turn from the marsh and the glow-worms, and sing  
of my star once more.'

So I walked in the warm wet by-ways, not daring to lift  
my eyes  
Lest love should drive me to singing my star supreme in  
the skies,  
And the world cried out, 'We will crown him, he sings  
of the lights that are,  
Glories of marshlight and glow-worm, not visions vain  
of a star!'

I said, 'Now my brows are laurelled, my hands filled full  
of their gold,  
I will sing the starry songs that these earthworms bade  
withhold.  
It is time to sing of my star!' for I dreamed that my  
star still shone,  
Then I lifted my eyes in my triumph. Night! night!  
and my star was gone.

## The Sick Journalist

**T**HROB, throb, throb, weariness, ache, and pain !  
One's heart and one's eyes on fire,  
And never a spark in one's brain.  
The stupid paper and ink,  
That might be turned into gold,  
Lie here unused,  
Since one's brain refused  
To do its tricks—as of old.  
One can suffer still, indeed,  
But one cannot think any more.  
There's no fire in the grate,  
No food on the plate,  
And the East-wind shrieks through the door.  
The sunshine grins in the street :  
It used to cheer me like wine,  
Now it only quickens my brain's sick beat ;  
And the children are crying for bread to eat  
And I cannot write a line !  
Molly, my pet—don't cry,  
Father can't write if you do—  
And anyhow, if you only knew,  
It's hard enough as it is.  
There, give old daddy a kiss,  
And cuddle down on the floor ;  
We'll have some dinner by-and-by.  
Now, fool, try ! Try once more !  
Hold your head tight in your hands,  
Bring your will to bear !  
The children are starving—your little ones—  
While you sit fooling there.  
Beth, with her golden hair ;  
Moll, with her rough, brown head—  
Here they are—see !

## The Sick Journalist 31

Against your knee,  
Waiting there to be fed!—  
I cannot bear their eyes.  
Their soft little kisses burn—  
They will cry again  
In vain, in vain,  
For the food that I cannot earn.  
If I could only write  
Just half a column or so  
On 'The Prospects of Trade,' or 'The Irish Question,'  
or 'Why are Wages so Low?'—  
The printers are waiting for copy now,  
I've had my next week's screw,  
There'll be nothing more till I've written something,  
God! what am I to do?  
If I could only write!  
The paper glares up white  
Like the cursed white of the heavy stone  
Under which *she* lies alone;  
And the ink is black like death,  
And the room and the window are black.  
Molly, Molly—the sun's gone out,  
Cannot you fetch it back?  
Did I frighten my little ones?  
Never mind, daddy dropped asleep—  
Cuddle down closely, creep  
Close to his knee  
And daddy will see  
If he can't do his writing. Vain!  
I shall never write again!  
Oh, God! was it like a love divine  
To make their lives hang on my pen  
When I cannot write a line?

## Two Lullabies

1

SLEEP, sleep, my little baby dear,  
 Thee shall no want or pain come near;  
 Sleep softly on thy downy nest,  
 Or on this lace veiled mother-breast.

Thy cradle is all silken lined,  
 Wrought roses on thy curtains twined,  
 Warm woolly blankets o'er thee spread,  
 And soft white pillows for thy head.

Much gold those little hands shall hold,  
 And wealth about thy life shall fold,  
 And thou shalt see nor pain nor strife,  
 Nor the low ills of common life.

These little feet shall never tread  
 Except on paths soft-carpeted,  
 And all life's flowers in wreaths shall twine  
 To deck that darling head of thine.

Thou shalt have overflowing measure  
 Of wealth and joy and peace and pleasure,  
 And thou shalt be right charitable  
 With all the crumbs that leave thy table.

And thou shalt praise God every day  
 For His good gifts that come thy way,  
 And again thank Him, and again,  
 That thou art not as other men.

For 'midst thy wealth thou wilt recall—  
 'Tis to God's grace thou owest it all;  
 And when all's spent that life has given,  
 Thou'lt have a golden home in heaven.

II

Sleep, little baby, sleep,  
Though the wind is cruel and cold,  
And my shawl that I've wrapped thee in  
Is old and ragged and thin ;  
And my hand is too frozen to hold—  
Yet my bosom's still warm—so creep  
Close to thy mother, and sleep !

Sleep, little baby, and rest,  
Though we wander alone through the night,  
And there is no food for me,  
No shelter for me and thee.  
Through the windows red fires shine bright,  
And tables show, heaped with the best—  
But there's naught for us there—so rest.

Sleep, you poor little thing !  
Just as pretty and dear  
As any fine lady's child.  
Oh, but my heart grows wild !—  
Is it worth while to stay here ?  
What good thing from life will spring  
For you—you poor little thing ?

Sleep, you poor little thing !  
Mine, my treasure, my own—  
I clasp you, I hold you close,  
My darling, my bird, my rose !  
Rich mothers have hearts like stone,  
Or else some help they would bring  
To you—you poor little thing ?

Sleep, little baby, sleep—  
If some good, rich mother would take  
My dear, I would kiss thee, and then  
Never come near thee again—

c

## Spring Song

Not though my heart should break !  
 I could leave thee, dear, for thy sake—  
 For the river is dark and deep,  
 And gives sleep, little baby, sleep !

1887.

## Spring Song

THE spring is here, and the long nights grow  
 Less bitterly cold than awhile ago ;  
 Our rags serve their purpose now, and keep  
 Warmth enough in us to let us sleep.  
 The rain that trickles down our walls  
 No longer seems to freeze as it falls ;  
 There was dust, not mud, on our feet to-day ;  
 There's some green in a flower-pot over the way ;  
 The sky-strip over the court's changed hue,  
 From dull yellow-grey to clear grey-blue ;  
 Through our broken windows no more the storm  
 Laughs and shrieks as we try to keep warm,  
 But through dusty panes the long sunbeams peer,  
 For the spring is here.

Small joy the greenness and grace of spring  
 To grey hard lives like our own can bring.  
 A drowning man cares little to think  
 Of the lights on the waves where he soon must sink.  
 The greenest garments the spring can wear  
 Are black already with our despair :  
 Earth will be one with us soon—shall we care  
 If snow or sunshine be over us there,  
 Or if wintry the world be we found so drear,  
 Or if spring be here ?

## Spring Song

35

In the western half of our Christian town  
The Winter only pretends to frown,  
And when his undreaded rage is done,  
The 'London season' they say is begun.  
With wine, feast, revelling, laugh and song,  
The hours rose-garlanded dance along,  
The whirl of wickedness wilder grows  
In this western camp of our master-foes ;  
They fight with each other—the victors take  
The largest share of the wealth we make ;  
They spend on their horses, their women, their wives,  
The money wrung from our blasted lives :  
It is theirs to enjoy—it is ours to pay.  
Do they never dream of a reckoning day,  
When the lives they have wrecked shall be counted up,  
And measured the blood that has brightened their cup,  
When we who have worked shall take payment due,  
And they for their work shall have payment too ?  
Do they dream of that coming hour ? Not they !  
Their feet flit fast down the smooth steep way,  
They see not the waiting snakes that hide  
In the hothouse flowers at their life-path's side,  
They know no justice, no pity, no fear—  
But the spring is here !

Yes—here ! In the hope we had almost lost,  
That has sprung to bud after long years' frost ;  
In this fire in our veins that cries, 'Give youth,  
Love, manhood, life, for the Right and the Truth' ;  
In our steady purpose, for Freedom's sake,  
Through custom, privilege, 'fate,' to break ;  
In the brains of the thinkers, the arms of the men  
Who will strike, and strike, and still strike again,  
Till they cut our way to the land of flowers,  
And the summer of freedom at last is ours—  
In these is the spring. The winter was sore—  
It is over and done, and will come no more.



## 36      These Little Ones

The fruit will grow with the changing year,  
Though only the blossoms now appear ;  
For the sake of the fruit the blossoms are dear,  
And the spring is here—the spring is here.

1888.

### These Little Ones

‘WHAT of the garden I gave?’  
God said to me ;

‘Hast thou been diligent to foster and save  
The life of flower and tree ?’

How have the roses thriven,  
The lilies I have given  
The pretty scented miracles that spring  
And summer come to bring ?’

‘My garden is fair and dear,’  
I said to God ;

‘From thorns and nettles I have kept it clear,  
Green-trimmed its sod.

The rose is red and bright,  
The lily a live delight ;  
I have not lost a flower of all the flowers  
That blessed my hours.’

‘What of the child I gave?’  
God said to me ;

‘The little little one I died to save  
And gave in trust to thee ?’

How have the flowers grown  
That in its soul were sown,  
The lovely living miracles of youth  
And hope and joy and truth ?’

## The Garden Refused 37

'The child's face is all white,'  
I said to God ;  
'It cries for cold and hunger in the night ;  
Its little feet have trod  
The pavement muddy and cold,  
It has no flowers to hold,  
And in its soul the flowers you set are dead."  
'Thou fool !' God said.

1907.

### The Garden Refused

**T**HERE is a garden, made for our delight,  
Where all the dreams we dare not dream come true.  
I know it, but I do not know the way.  
We slip and stumble in the doubtful night,  
Where everything is difficult and new,  
And clouds our breath has made obscure the day.

The blank, unhappy towns, where sick men strive,  
Still doing work that yet is never done,  
The hymns to Gold that drown their desperate voice :  
The weeds that grow where once corn stood alive,  
The black injustice that puts out the sun ;  
These are our portion, since they are our choice.

Yet there the garden blows, with rose on rose,  
The sunny shadow-dappled lawns are there,  
There the immortal lilies, heavenly-sweet.  
Oh roses that for us shall not unclose !  
Oh lilies that we shall not pluck or wear !  
Oh dewy lawns untrodden by our feet !

1907.

## 38 A Great Industrial Centre

### A Great Industrial Centre

**S**QUALID street after squalid street,  
Endless rows of them, each the same,  
Black dust under your weary feet,  
Dust upon every face you meet,  
Dust in their hearts, too—or so it seems—  
Dust in the place of dreams.

Spring in her beauty thrills and thrives,  
Here men hardly have heard her name.  
Work is the end and aim of their lives—  
Work, work, work! for children and wives;  
Work for a life which, when it is won,  
Is the saddest under the sun!

Work—one dark and unending round  
In black dull workshops, out of the light;  
Work that others' ease may abound,  
Work that delight for them may be found,  
Work without hope, without pause, without peace,  
That only in death can cease.

Brothers, who live glad lives in the sun,  
What of these men, at work in the night?  
God will ask you what you have done;  
Their lives be required of you—every one—  
Ye, who were glad and who liked life well,  
While they did your work—in hell!

London's Voices

Speak to Two Souls—Who thus Reply :

I

**I**N all my work, in all the children's play,  
 I hear the ceaseless hum of London near ;  
 It cries to me, I cannot choose but hear  
 Its never-ending wail, by night and day.  
 So many millions—is it vain to pray  
 That all may win such peace as I have here,  
 With books, and work, and little children dear?—  
 That flowers like mine may grow along their way?

Through all my happy life I hear the cry,  
 The exceeding bitter cry of human pain,  
 And shudder as the deathless wail sweeps by.  
 I can do nothing—even hope is vain  
 That the bright light of peace and purity  
 In those lost souls may ever shine again!

II

'Mid pine woods' whisper and the hum of bees  
 I heard a voice that was not bee nor wood :  
 'Here, in the city, Gold has trampled Good.  
 Come thou, do battle till this strife shall cease !'  
 I left the mill, the meadows and the trees,  
 And came to do the little best I could  
 For these, God's poor ; and, oh, my God, I would  
 I had a thousand lives to give for these !

What can one hand do 'gainst a world of wrong ?  
 Yet, when the voice said, 'Come !' how could I stay ?  
 The foe is mighty, and the battle long  
 (And love is sweet, and there are flowers in May),  
 And Good seems weak, and Gold is very strong ;  
 But, while these fight, I dare not turn away.

## Torch-Bearers

**D**ARK is the night ; and through its haunted shadows  
 We blindly grope and stumble—sometimes fall ;  
 No star is near enough to light the darkness,  
 And priest-lit tapers cast no light at all,  
 Save such a feeble and delusive glimmer  
 As night-lamps cast upon a sick-room wall.

Yet, each a torch we bear—lit or unlighted ;  
 Burning for self it is a marsh-light's gleam,  
 Kindled for others 'tis the child of sunlight,  
 And darkness shrinks through twilight at its beam.  
 Were each torch duly lit, O world long darkened,  
 How would you bear the sudden light supreme ?

Vague dreams and vain ! See, thou who idly drest  
 Of what would be if every torch were lit,  
 See where thine own smoulders a wasted ember,  
 Thy torch—for noblest uses framed and fit.  
 Light thine own torch—and hold it to thy brother,  
 And his shall kindle at the flame of it.

1889.

## A Last Appeal

**K**NOWING our needs, hardly knowing our powers,  
 Hear how we cry to you, brothers of ours !—  
 Brothers in nature, pulse, passions, and pains,  
 Our sins in you, and your blood in our veins.  
 First in your palace, or last in our den,  
 Basest or best, we are all of us men !

## A Last Appeal

41

Justice eternal cries out in our name,  
What is the least common manhood can claim?

‘ Food that we make for you,  
Money we earn :  
Give us our share of them—  
Give us our turn.’

You with the land and the money, we make  
Out of our lives the new wealth that you take.  
Have we earned only such pitiful dole  
As just holds worn body to desolate soul?  
When that soul is bewildered each day and perplex  
With the problem of how to get bread for the next,  
Is it better to end it, as some of us do,  
Or to fight it out bravely, still calling to you—

‘ Food that we make for you,  
Money we earn :  
Give us our share of them—  
Give us our turn ’ ?

Ever more passionate grows our demand—  
Give us our share of our food and our land :  
Give us our rights, make us equal and free—  
Let us be all we are not, but might be.  
Our sons would be honest, our daughters be pure,  
If our wage were more certain, your vices less sure—  
Oh, you who are forging the fetters we feel,  
Hear our wild protest, our maddened appeal—

‘ Food that we make for you,  
Money we earn :  
Give us our share of them—  
Give us our turn.’

Hear us, and answer, while Time is your friend,  
Lest we be answered by God in the end ;  
Lest, when the flame of His patience burns low,  
We be the weapon He shapes for His blow—

## New Year Song

Lest with His foot on your necks He shall stand,  
 And appeal that you spurned be new-born as command,  
 And thunder your doom, as you die by the rod  
 Of the vengeance of man through the justice of God.

‘ Food that we make for you,  
 Money we earn :  
 Give us our share of them—  
 Give us our turn.’

1884.

## New Year Song

**W**E climb the hill ; the mist conceals  
 That valley where we could not stay ;  
 Surely this hill's crest, gained, reveals  
 The glory of the sunlit day.  
 The hill is climbed. Still shadow-land—  
 Still darkling looms another hill.  
 Oh, weary feet !—climb that to find  
 A new ascent, 'mid shadows still !  
 We dare not stop or think of rest,  
 This one hill may be all that lies  
 Between us and our souls' desire—  
 The splendour of the eastern skies.

Through long long lives we till and tend,  
 Sow, weed, and water, all in vain ;  
 Without the flower we looked to find,  
 Each year springs, blooms, and dies again.  
 Bowed down with our unanswered prayers,  
 Our face averted from our past,  
 We watch each year grow green, and cry,  
 ‘ Surely this brings our flower at last !’  
 Failure on failure ! What ! tired out ?  
 Too tired to live ? Ah, dare you die  
 When this new year may bud and bear  
 Your longed-for flower of Liberty ?

## Here and There

AH me, how hot and weary here in town  
The days crawl by!  
How otherwise they go my heart records,  
Where the marsh meadows lie  
And white sheep crop the grass, and seagulls sail  
Between the lovely earth and lovely sky.

Here the sun grins along the dusty street  
Beneath pale skies:  
Hark! spiritless, sad tramp of toiling feet,  
Hoarse hawkers, curses, cries—  
Through these I hear the song that the sea sings  
To the far meadowlands of Paradise.

O golden-lichened church and red-roofed barn—  
O long sweet days—  
O changing, unchanged skies, straight dykes all gay  
With sedge and water mace—  
O fair marsh land desirable and dear—  
How far from you lie my life's weary ways!

Yet in my darkest night there shines a star  
More fair than day;  
There is a flower that blossoms sweet and white  
In the sad city way.  
That flower blooms not where the wide marshes gleam,  
That star shines only when the skies are gray.

For here fair peace and passionate pleasure wane  
Before the light  
Of radiant dreams that make our lives worth life,  
And turn to noon our night:  
We fight for freedom and the souls of men—  
Here, and not there, is fought and won our fight!



## 44 A Ballad of Canterbury

### A Ballad of Canterbury

**A** CROSS the grim, gray northern sea  
The Danish warships went,  
Snake-shaped, and manned by mighty men  
On blood and plunder bent ;  
And they landed on a smiling land—  
The garden-land of Kent.

They sacked the farms, they spoiled the corn,  
They set the ricks aflame ;  
They slew the men with axe and sword,  
They slew the maids with shame ;  
Until, to Canterbury town,  
Made mad with blood, they came.

Archbishop Alphege walked the wall  
And looked down on the foe.  
'Now fly, my lord !' his monks implored,  
'While yet a man may go !'  
'Shame on you, monks of mine,' he cried,  
'To shame your bishop so !

'What, would you have the shepherd flee  
Like any hireling knave ?  
What, leave my church, my poor—God's poor,  
To a dark and prayerless grave ?  
No ! by the body of my Lord,  
My skin I will not save !'

And when men heard his true, strong word,  
They bore them as men should.  
For twenty nights and twenty days  
The foemen they withstood,  
And, day and night, shone tapers bright,  
And incense veiled the rood.

## A Ballad of Canterbury 45

The warriors manned the walls without,  
The monks prayed on within,  
Till Satan, wroth to see how prayer  
And valour fared to win,  
Whispered a traitor, who stole out  
And let the foemen in.

Then through the quiet church there ran  
A sudden breath of fear ;  
The monks made haste to bar the door,  
And hide the golden gear ;  
And to their lord once more they cried,  
'Hide, hide ! the foe is here !'

Through all the church's windows showed  
The sudden laugh of flame ;  
Along the street went trampling feet,  
And through the smoke there came  
The voice of women, calling shrill  
Upon the Saviour's name.

And 'Hide ! oh, hide !' the monks all cried,  
'Nor meet such foes as these !'  
'Be still,' he said, 'hide if ye will,  
Live on, and take your ease !  
By my Lord's death, *my* latest breath,  
Like His, shall speak of peace !'

He strode along the dusky aisle,  
And flung the church doors wide ;  
Bright armour shone, and blazing homes  
Lit up the world outside,  
And in the streets reeled to and fro  
A bloody human tide.

## 46 A Ballad of Canterbury

The mailed barbarians laughed aloud  
To see the brave blood flow ;  
They trampled on the breast and hair  
Of girls their swords laid low,  
And on the points of reeking spears  
Tossed babies to and fro.

Alphege stood forth ; his pale face gleamed  
Against the dark red tide.  
'Forbear, your cup of guilt is full !  
Your sins are red,' he cried ;  
'Spare these poor sheep, my lambs, for whom  
The King of Heaven died !'

Drunken with blood and lust of fight,  
Loud laughed Thorkill the Dane.  
'Stand thou and see us shear thy sheep  
Before thy foolish fane !  
Hear how they weep ! They bleat, thy sheep,  
That thou mayst know their pain !'

He stood, and saw his monks all slain ;  
The altar steps ran red ;  
In horrid heaps men lay about,  
The dying with the dead ;  
And the east brightened, and the sky  
Grew rosy overhead.

Then from the church a tiny puff  
Of smoke rose 'gainst the sky,  
Out broke the fire, and flame on flame  
Leaped palely out on high,  
Till but the church's walls were left  
For men to know it by.

## A Ballad of Canterbury 47

And when the sweet sun laughed again  
O'er fields and furrows brown,  
The brave archbishop hid his eyes,  
Until the tears dropped down  
On the charred blackness of the wreck  
Of Canterbury town.

\* \* \* \*

'Now, Saxon shepherd, send a word  
Unto thy timid sheep,  
And bid them greaten up their hearts,  
And to our feet dare creep,  
And bring a ransom here which we,  
Instead of thee, may keep.'

Archbishop Alphege stood alone,  
Bruised, beaten, weary-eyed ;  
Loaded with chains, with aching heart,  
And wounded in the side ;  
And in his hour of utmost pain  
Thus to the Dane replied :

'Ye men of blood, my blood shall flow  
Before this thing shall be ;  
If I be held till ransom come,  
I never shall be free ;  
For by God's heart, God's poor shall never  
Be robbed to ransom me !'

They flung him in a dungeon dark,  
They heaped on him fresh chains,  
They promised him unnumbered ills  
And unimagined pains ;  
But still he said, 'No English shall  
Be taxed to profit Danes !'

## 48 A Ballad of Canterbury

The months passed by ; no ransom came ;  
Their threats had almost ceased,  
When Thorkill held, on Easter-Eve,  
A great and brutal feast ;  
And they sent and dragged the Christian man  
Before the pagan beast.

Down the great hall, from east to west,  
The long rough tables ran ;  
They roasted oxen, sheep, and deer,  
And then the drink began—  
At last in all that mighty hall  
Was not one sober man.

'Twas then they brought the bishop forth  
Before the drunken throng ;  
And 'Send for ransom !' Thorkill cried,  
'You are weak, and we are strong,  
Or, by the hand of Thor, you die—  
We have borne with you too long !'

The savage faces of the Danes  
Leered redly all around ;  
The bones of beasts and empty cups  
Lay heaped upon the ground,  
And 'mid the crowd of howling wolves  
The Christian saint stood bound.

He looked in Thorkill's angry eyes  
And knew what thing should be,  
Then spake : 'By God, who died to save  
The poor, and me, and thee,  
Thou art not strong enough—God's poor  
Shall not be taxed for me !'

‘Gold! Give us gold, or die!’ All round  
 The rising tumult ran.  
 ‘I give my life, I give God’s word,  
 I give what gifts I can!  
 Bleed Christian sheep for pagan wolves?  
 Find you some other man!’

And, as he spake, the whole crowd rose  
 With one fierce shout and yell;  
 They flung at him the bones of beasts,  
 They aimed right strong and well.  
 ‘O Christ, O Shepherd, guard Thy sheep!’  
 The bishop cried—and fell.

\* \* \* \*

And so men call him ‘Saint,’ yet some  
 Deemed this an unearned crown,  
 Since ’twas not for the Church or faith  
 He laid his brave life down;  
 But otherwise men deemed of it  
 In Canterbury town.

‘Not for the Church he died,’ they said,  
 ‘Yet he our saint shall be,  
 Since for Christ’s poor he gave his life,  
 So for Christ’s self died he.  
 “Who does it to the least of these,  
 Has done it unto Me!”’

## Old Age

**B**ETWEEN the midnight and the morn  
 When wake the weary heart and head,  
 Troops of gray ghosts from lands forlorn  
 Keep tryst about my sleepless bed.

I hear their cold, thin voices say :  
 'Your youth is dying ; by-and-by  
 All that makes up your life to-day  
 Withered by age, will shrink and die !'

Will it be so ? Will age slay all  
 The dreams of love and hope and faith—  
 Put out the sun beyond recall,  
 And lap us in a living death ?

Will hearts grown old forget their youth ?  
 And hands grown old give up the strife ?  
 Shall we accept as ordered truth  
 The dismal anarchy of life ?

Better die now—at once be free  
 Of hope and fear—renounce the whole :  
 For of what worth would living be  
 Should one—grown old—outlive one's soul ?

Yet see : through curtains closely drawn  
 Creeps in the exorcising light ;  
 The sacred fingers of the dawn  
 Put all my troop of ghosts to flight.

And then I hear the brave Sun's voice,  
 Though still the skies are gray and dim :  
 'Old age comes never—Oh, rejoice—  
 Except to those who beckon him.

'All that youth's dreams are nourished by,  
 By that shall dreams in age be fed—  
 Thy noble dreams can never die  
 Until thyself shall wish them dead !'

At the Year's End

FLUSHED with a crimson sunrise beauty,  
The fair new year its promise gave ;  
Such dreams we had of love, of duty,  
Of heights to scale, of foes to brave !  
Oh, how hope's fire our future lighted—  
How much to do, how much to know,  
Yet on its brink we shrank affrighted  
A year ago.

And now the year is done—its pleasure  
So brief, so bright—its hours of pain ;  
Some moments' memories we treasure,  
Some recollections loathe in vain.  
Oh, for a brain where could not waken  
Remembrances of purpose crossed,  
Of trusts abandoned, aims forsaken,  
And chances lost !

The changing seasons thrust upon us  
Another year, fair-faced and new ;  
What evil have the old years done us  
That this in its turn will not do ?  
This, too, will die, and leave us grieving  
For all the ills its arms enfold—  
For faiths betrayed, for friends deceiving,  
And love grown cold.

We have been fooled. The hopes that fooled us—  
We know them now—have been a lie ;  
The star that led, the light that ruled us—  
We scorn them, and we pass them by.



## A Choice

Shut out hope's light ; past is the season  
 When rose-red glow seemed good to see.  
 Look—by the cold white light of reason,  
 These things shall be :

A long, dim vista, blank and dreary—  
 The same hard failure, small success ;  
 The same tired heart, the brain still weary  
 Of its intense self-consciousness ;  
 The old despair, the old repining,  
 And, through the future's deepest night,  
 Down life's untrodden ways still shining,  
 The old hope's light !

## A Choice

THE flood of utter change is loosed. A space  
 Is ours yet, for its coming to prepare.  
 Shall we build dams with cautious, clumsy care,  
 Or stand with idle hands and frightened face,  
 And so be whirled all broken from our place,  
 Or perish with the dams we builded there ?  
 Or shall we dig a broad, deep channel, where  
 Most fields may feel the flood's benign embrace ?

Thus turned 'twill be a calm majestic flood  
 Of plenty, peace, and fertilising power,  
 Whose banks fresh flowers of love and joy shall deck.  
 Oppose it : at the inevitable hour,  
 Tumultuous, black with ruin, red with blood,  
 'Twill come—and you shall have no chance but wreck !

The Devil's Due

A priest tells how, in his youth, a church was built by the free labour of love—as was men's wont in those days; and how the stone and wood were paid for by one who had grown rich on usury and the pillage of the poor—and of what chanced thereafter.

**A** RSENIUS, priest of God, I tell,  
 For warning in your younger ears,  
 Humbly and plainly what befell  
 That year—gone by a many years—  
 When Veraignes church was built. Ah! then  
 Brave churches grew 'neath hands of men :  
 We see not now their like again.

We built it on the green hill-side  
 That leans its bosom o'er the town,  
 So that its presence, sanctified,  
 Might ever on our lives look down.  
 We built; and those who built not, they  
 Brought us their blessing day by day,  
 And lingered to rejoice and pray.

For years the masons toiled, for years  
 The craftsmen wrought till they had made  
 A church we scarce could see for tears—  
 Its fairness made our love afraid.  
 Its rich-wrought silver tracery  
 Stood out against the deep bright sky  
 Like good deeds 'gainst eternity.

In the deep roof each separate beam  
 Had its own garland—ivy, vine,—  
 Giving to man the carver's dream,  
 In sight of men a certain sign—  
 And all day long the workers plied.  
 'The church shall finished be,' we cried,  
 'And consecrate by Easter-tide.'

## 54            The Devil's Due

Our church! It was so fair, so dear,  
So fit a church to praise God in!  
It had such show of carven gear,  
Such chiselled work, without, within!  
Such marble for the steps and floor,  
Such window-jewels and such store  
Of gold and gems the altar bore!

Each stone by loving hands was hewn,  
By loving hands each beam was sawn;  
The hammers made a merry tune  
In winter dusk and summer dawn.  
Love built the house, but gold had paid  
For that wherewith the house was made.  
'Would love had given all!' we said.

But poor in all save love were we,  
And he was poor in all save gold  
Who gave the gold. By usury  
Were gained his riches manifold.  
We knew that? If we knew, we thought  
'Tis good if men do good in aught,  
And by good works may heaven be bought!

At last the echo died in air  
Of the last stroke. The silence then  
Passed in to fill the church, left bare  
Of the loving voice of Christian men.  
The silence saddened all the sun,  
So gladly was our work begun.  
Now all that happy work was done.

Did any voices in the night  
Call through those arches? Were there wings  
That swept between the pillars white—  
Wide pinions of unvisioned things?

## The Devil's Due

55

The priests who watched the relics heard  
Wing-whispers—not of bat or bird—  
And moan of inarticulate word.

Then sunlight, morning, and sweet air  
Adorned our church, and there were borne  
Great sheaves of boughs of blossoms fair  
To grace the consecration morn.  
Then round our church trooped knight and dame ;  
Within, alone, the bishop came,  
And the twelve candles leaped to flame.

Then round our church the bishop went  
With all his priests—a brave array.  
There was no sign nor portent sent  
As, glad at heart, he went his way,  
Sprinkling the holy water round  
Three times on walls and crowd and ground  
Within the empty churchyard's bound.

Then—but ye know the function's scope  
At consecration—all the show  
Of torch and incense, stole and cope ;  
And how the acolytes do go  
Before the bishop—how they bear  
The lighted tapers, flaming fair,  
Blown back by the sweet wavering air.

The bishop, knocking at the door,  
The deacon answering from within,  
'Lift up your heads, ye gates, be sure  
The King of Glory shall come in'—  
The bishop passed in with the choir.  
Thank God for this—our soul's desire,  
Our altar, meet for heaven's fire !

The bishop, kneeling in his place  
 Where our bright windows made day dim,  
 With all heaven's glory in his face,  
 Began the consecration hymn :  
 ' *Veni,*' he sang, in clear strong tone.  
 Then—on the instant—song was done,  
 Its very echo scattered—gone !

For, as the bishop's voice rang clear,  
 Another voice rang clearer still—  
 A voice wherein the soul could hear  
 The discord of unmeasured ill—  
 And sudden breathless silence fell  
 On all the church. And I wot well  
 There are such silences in hell.

Taper and torch died down—went out—  
 And all our church grew dark and cold,  
 And deathly odours crept about,  
 And chill, as of the churchyard mould ;  
 And every flower drooped its head,  
 And all the rose's leaves were shed,  
 And all the lilies dropped down dead.

There, in the bishop's chair, we saw—  
 How can I tell you ? Memories shrink  
 To mix anew the cup of awe  
 We shuddering mortals had to drink.  
 What was it there ? The shape that stood  
 Before the altar and the rood—  
 It was not human flesh and blood !

A light more bright than any sun,  
 A shade more dark than any night,  
 A shape that human shape was none,  
 A cloud, a sense of winged might,

## The Devil's Due

57

And, like an infernal trumpet sound,  
Rang through the church's hush profound  
A voice. We listened horror-bound.

'*Venio!* Cease, cease to consecrate!  
Love built the church, but it is mine!  
'Tis built of stone hewn out by hate,  
Cemented by man's blood divine.  
Whence came the gold that paid for this?  
From pillage of the poor, I wis—  
That gold was mine, and mine this is!

'Your King has cursed the usurer's gold,  
He gives it to me for my fee!  
Your church is builded, but behold  
Your church is fair for me—for me!  
Who robs the poor to me is given;  
Impenitent and unforgiven,  
His church is built for hell, not heaven!'

Then, as we gazed, the face grew clear,  
And all men stood as turned to stone;  
Each man beheld through dews of fear  
A face—his own—yet not his own;  
His own face, darkened, lost, debased,  
With hell's own signet stamped and traced,  
And all the God in it effaced.

A crash like thunder shook the walls,  
A flame like lightning shot them through:  
'Fly, fly before the judgment falls,  
And all these stones be fallen on you!'  
And as we fled we saw bright gleams  
Of fire leap out 'mid joists and beams.  
Our church! Oh, love—oh, hopes—oh, dreams!

## 58            The Devil's Due

We stood without—a pallid throng—  
And as the flame leaped high and higher,  
Shrill winds we heard that rushed along  
And fanned the transports of the fire.  
The sky grew black ; against the sky  
The blue and scarlet flames leaped high,  
And cries as of lost souls wailed by.

The church in glowing vesture stood,  
The lead ran down as it were wax,  
The great stones cracked and burned like wood,  
The wood caught fire and flamed like flax :  
A horrid chequered light and shade,  
By smoke and flame alternate made,  
Upon men's upturned faces played.

Down crashed the walls. Our lovely spire,  
A blackened ruin, fell and lay.  
The very earth about caught fire,  
And flame-tongues licked along the clay.  
The fire did neither stay nor spare  
Till the foundations were laid bare  
To the hot, sickened, smoke-filled air.

There in the sight of men it lay,  
Our church that we had made so fair !  
A heap of ashes white and gray,  
With sparks still gleaming here and there.  
The sun came out again, and shone  
On all our loving work undone—  
Our church destroyed, our labour gone !

Gone ? Is it gone ? God knows it, no !  
The hands that builded built aright :  
The men who loved and laboured so,  
Their church is built in heaven's height !  
In every stone a glittering gem,  
Gold in the gold Jerusalem—  
The church their love built waits for them.

## The Despot

**T**HE garden mould was damp and chill,  
Winter had had his brutal will  
Since over all the year's content  
His devastating legions went.

Then Spring's bright banners came : there woke  
Millions of little growing folk  
Who thrilled to know the winter done,  
Gave thanks, and strove towards the sun.

Not so the elect ; reserved, and slow  
To trust a stranger-sun and grow,  
They hesitated, cowered and hid  
Waiting to see what others did.

Yet even they, a little, grew,  
Put out prim leaves to day and dew,  
And lifted level formal heads  
In their appointed garden beds.

The gardener came : he coldly loved  
The flowers that lived as he approved,  
That duly, decorously grew  
As he, the despot, meant them to.

He saw the wildlings flower more brave  
And bright than any cultured slave ;  
Yet, since he had not set them there,  
He hated them for being fair.

So he uprooted, one by one  
The free things that had loved the sun,  
The happy, eager, fruitful seeds  
That had not known that they were weeds.



## August

LEAVE me alone, for August's sleepy charm  
Is on me, and I will not break the spell ;  
My head is on the mighty Mother's arm :  
I will not ask if life goes ill or well.  
There is no world !—I do not care to know  
Whence aught has come, nor whither it shall go.

I want to wander over pastures still,  
Where sheared white sheep and mild-eyed cattle graze ;  
To climb the thymy, clover-covered hill,  
To look down on the valley's hot blue haze ;  
And on the short brown turf for hours to lie  
Gazing straight up into the clear, deep sky.

I want to walk through crisp gold harvest fields,  
Through meadows yellowed by the August heat ;  
To loiter through the cool dim wood, that yields  
Such perfect flowers and quiet so complete—  
The happy woods, where every bud and leaf  
Is full of dreams as life is full of grief.

I want to think no more of all the pain  
That in the city thrives, a poison-flower—  
The eternal loss, the never-coming gain,  
The lifelong woe—the joy that lives an hour,  
Bright, evanescent as the dew that dawn  
Shows on this silent, wood-encircled lawn.

I want to pull the honey-bud that twines  
About the blackberries and gold-leaf sloes ;  
To part the boughs where the rare water shines,  
Tread the soft bank whereby the bulrush grows—  
I want to be no more myself, but be  
Made one with all the beauty that I see.

Oh, happy country, myriad voiced and dear,  
 I have no heart, no eyes, except for you ;  
 Yours are the only voices I will hear,  
 Yours is the only bidding I will do :  
 You bid me be at peace, and let alone  
 That loud, rough world where peace is never known.

Yet through your voices comes a sterner cry,  
 A voice I cannot silence if I would ;  
 It mars the song the lark sings to the sky,  
 It breaks the changeful music of the wood.  
 ' Back to your post—a charge you have to keep—  
 Freedom is bleeding while her soldiers sleep.'

Oh, heart of mine I have to carry here,  
 Will you not let me rest a little while ?—  
 A space 'mid doubtful fight and doubtful fear—  
 A little space to see the Mother's smile,  
 To stretch my hands out to her, and possess  
 No sense of aught but of her loveliness ?

Ah, just this power to feel how she is fair  
 Means just the power to see how foul life is.  
 How can I linger in the sacred air  
 And taste the pure wine of the dear sun's kiss  
 When in the outer dark my brothers moan,  
 Nor even guess the joys that I have known ?

Back the least soldier goes ! To jar and fret,  
 To hope uncrowned—faith tried—love wounded sore—  
 To prayers that never have been answered yet,  
 To dreams that may be dreams for evermore ;  
 To all that, after all, is far more dear  
 Than all the joys of all the changing year.

## The Children

**S**PRING!—almost summer! The winter's gone,  
 His reign is over, his hour is done!  
 Here's the crumpled green of the new-born leaves,  
 Here are baby-sparrows 'neath cottage eaves;  
 And the apple orchards are thick with bloom,  
 And the woods are gathering their summer gloom;  
 And the cottage gardens are gay and bright  
 With the wallflower brown and the rock-plant white;  
 And the heart of the risen year beats free  
 In meadow and forest, in flower and tree;  
 It beats in the prisoned hearts of men,  
 Till vaguely, vainly they long again  
 For the joy that is promised by every spring,  
 The joy no summer will ever bring.  
 And the children wander by field and brake,  
 And clap their hands for the daisies' sake.

The bountiful summer laughs and throws  
 Her garment of green and her wreath of rose  
 On great vile cities that men have raised,  
 Where her name is unloved, unknown, unpraised,  
 And only gold is counted of worth  
 Of all the gifts of the goodly earth.  
 And in this desert that men have made  
 Grow white-faced children that never played  
 With daisies and cowslips, nor laughed and lay  
 On the hot gray heaps of the scented hay—  
 The poor pale children who never have heard  
 The perfect song of an uncaged bird:  
 They never have gathered a growing flower,  
 Or strayed through a wood for a truant hour—  
 They sit in groups and they seem to *wait*,  
 Unfriended and hopeless and desolate.

## A Word for the Future 63

Do they wait for the hero who is to come  
To teach them the meaning of love and home—  
To take them away from the heavy frown  
Of the high black walls and the cruel town,  
To where there is light and a rest from noise,  
And love for the children of men, and toys?

Who is to save them? Ah! I and you  
Have the chance and the choice this fair deed to do.  
Where Gold is god, there the children must  
Be ground 'neath his wheels in the bloody dust;  
But if Love be god—and a temple raised  
Where gold shall be cursèd and love be praised—  
When the temple is clean and the altar fair,  
The children their garlands shall bring and bear  
The first of all who shall gather there!

## A Word for the Future

**W**HEN we sow the good seed of the present,  
That the future will garner and gain,  
For whom do we till, weed, and water,  
For whom watch the sun and the rain,  
With passionate faith that our waiting  
And labour will not be in vain?

Not the men and the women about us—  
Themselves but themselves can make free;  
Not they, more than we, the full harvest  
Of the seed we are sowing will see;  
But the fruits will be reaped by the children—  
The men and the women to be.

## 64 A Word for the Future

O, the children!—the rose-leaf soft faces,  
The sweet little voices, and mild,  
The arms that have clung and caressed us,  
The lips that have babbled and smiled,—  
Have these blinded us so we discern not  
That a child is not only a child?

Not only a toy and a treasure  
For mother's and father's delight,  
Not only a flower want may wither,  
Or lovelessness ruin and blight,  
But a soul to be saved, in Truth's sunshine,  
Or lost where Truth's absence makes night.

And the souls that shall shape the world's future  
Are the souls we are shaping to-day!  
Let the children have share in our justice,  
Not just in our pity and play.  
They will do the world's work, and our work is  
To show them the work and the way.

And he who is helping the children,  
Who are frail as the buds of a rose,  
Who is keeping the canker from blighting  
The blossoms before they unclose,  
And making the future sons hardy  
To face all the future's fell foes,—

He is doing the world's work eternal  
That the first dawn of soul saw begun;  
He is hastening the hour when the children  
The battles we lost will have won:  
When the deeds that we did not, and could not,  
Those small hands—grown strong—will have done.

## Chains Invisible

**T**HE lilies in my garden grow,  
Wide meadows ring my garden round,  
In that green copse wild violets blow,  
And pale, frail cuckoo flowers are found.  
For all you see and all you hear,  
The city might be miles away,  
And yet you feel the city near  
Through all the quiet of the day.

Sweet smells the earth, wet with sweet rain,  
Sweet lilac waves in moonlight pale,  
And from the wood beyond the lane  
I hear the hidden nightingale.  
Though field and wood about me lie,  
Hushed soft in dew and deep delight,  
Yet can I hear the city's sigh  
Through all the silence of the night.

For me the skylark nests and sings,  
For me the vine her garland weaves ;  
The swallow folds her glossy wings  
To build beneath my cottage eaves.  
But I can feel the giant near,  
Can hear his slaves by daylight weep,  
And, when at last the night is here,  
I hear him moaning in his sleep.

Oh ! for a little space of ground,  
Though not a flower should make it gay,  
Where miles of meadows wrapped me round,  
And leagues and leagues of silence lay.  
Oh ! for a wind-lashed, treeless down,  
A black night and a rising sea,  
And never a thought of London town,  
To steal the world's delight from me !

## Judas

**F**OR what wilt thou sell thy Lord ?  
 ‘For certain pieces of silver, since wealth buys the  
 world’s good word.’  
 But the world’s word, how canst thou hear it, while thy  
 brothers cry scorn on thy name ?  
 And how shall thy bargain content thee, when thy  
 brothers shall clothe thee with shame ?

For what shall thy brother be sold ?  
 ‘For the rosy garland of pleasure, and the coveted  
 crown of gold.’  
 But thy soul will turn them to thorns, and to heaviness  
 binding thy head,  
 While women are dying of shame, and children are  
 crying for bread.

For what wilt thou sell thy soul ?  
 ‘For the world.’ And what shall it profit, when thou  
 shalt have gained the whole ?  
 What profit the things thou hast, if the thing thou art be  
 so mean ?  
 Wilt thou fill, with the husks of having, the void of the  
 might-have-been ?

‘But, when my soul shall be gone,  
 No more shall I fail to profit by all the deeds I have done !  
 And wealth and the world and pleasure shall sing sweet  
 songs in my ear  
 When the stupid soul is silenced, which never would let  
 me hear.

## ‘ Until the Day Break . . . ’ 67

‘ And if a void there should be  
I shall not feel it or know it ; it will be nothing to me ! ’  
It will be nothing to thee, and thou shalt be nothing to  
men  
But a ghost whose treasure is lost, and who shall not find  
it again.

‘ But I shall have pleasure and praise ! ’  
Praise shall not pleasure thee then, nor pleasure laugh in  
thy days :  
For as colour is not, without light, so happiness is not,  
without  
Thy Brother, the Lord whom thou soldest—and the  
soul that thou hast cast out !

## ‘ Until the Day Break . . . ’

**W**HEN head and hands and heart alike are weary ;  
When Hope with folded wings sinks out of sight ;  
When all thy striving fails to disentangle  
From out wrong’s skein the golden threads of right ;  
When all thy knowledge seems a marsh-light’s glimmer,  
That only shows the blackness of the night ;

In the dark hour when victory seems hopeless,  
Against thy lance when armies are arrayed,  
When failure writes itself upon thy forehead,  
By foes outnumbered and by friends betrayed ;  
Still stand thou fast, though faith be bruised and wounded,  
Still face thy future, still be undismayed !



While one true man speaks out against injustice,  
 While through men's chorused 'Right!' clear rings  
 his 'Wrong!'  
 Freedom still lives. One day she will reward him  
 Who trusted in her though she tarried long,  
 Who held her creed, was faithful till her coming,  
 Who, for her sake, strove, suffered, and was strong.

She will bring crowns for those who love and serve her ;  
 If thou canst live for her, be satisfied ;  
 If thou canst die for her, rejoice ! Our brothers  
 At least shall crown our graves and say, 'These died  
 Believing in the sun when night was blackest,  
 And by our dawn their faith is justified !'

1900.

## Knowledge

I

I SAW a people trampled on, oppressed,  
 With helpless hands, and eyes of light afraid,  
 With aching shoulders whereon burdens laid  
 By day and night choked hope and murdered rest ;  
 A people sordid, sad, unloved, unblessed,  
 Whose shroud by their own hands was ever made,  
 Whose never-ending toil was only paid  
 By death-in-life—or death, of life's gifts best.

'What help,' I cried, 'for these whose hands are weak—  
 Too weak to hold the weapons they should wield ;  
 Too weak to grasp a helping hand, or seek  
 With armed battalions to dispute the field,  
 And on the oppressors just revenge to wreak ?'  
 Then—as I cried—the helper was revealed.

## A Star in the East 69

II

I saw a woman, pure, and calm, and grand,  
With strong broad brows, and eyes whose keen clear flame  
Lit up men's hearts and showed them glory and shame,  
And what things could, and what things could not stand,  
Justice and Honour stood at her right hand ;  
And blazoned on her forehead was her name,  
Too bright for me to read ; and as she came  
Men bowed and worshipped her through all the land.

And evil could not live before her eyes,  
And good rose up to answer to her call.  
'Who art thou,' then I said, 'that dost arise  
Strong to redeem this people from their thrall ?'  
She answered me with tender voice and wise :  
'My name is Knowledge—and I conquer all !'

### A Star in the East

For the first Art Exhibition at St. Jude's, Whitechapel

LIKE a fair flower springing fresh, sweet, and bright,  
Through prison stones ; or like one perfect song  
Heard in a dream on one remembered night,  
When waking worlds were dumb with grief and wrong ;  
Like the one kiss that links—first kiss and last—  
The inevitable future spent apart  
With the immutable divided past ;  
So in the east shines out this star of Art.

The narrow-shouldered, pale-faced girl and boy  
Nestle against Art's new-found, love-warm breast,  
And feel vague stirrings of a far-off joy,  
Which life has never for themselves possessed.

70            To his Daughter

And dimly guess at wonders hardly known  
Even as dreams—and weep glad tears to see  
A loveliness that is at once life's own,  
And yet is something life can never be.

Not worse will work the flying busy hand  
Because the soul has drunk a cup of pleasure,  
Has picked up on its leaden-coloured strand  
Some little jewel of Art's splendid treasure,  
Nor will less work be done because men see  
That work is not the only thing in life,  
Because they have been glad at heart and free  
A little space 'mid sorrow, sin, and strife.

And this sweet draught may banish men's content?  
For this we pray and strive—not all in vain—  
That men may reach such heights of discontent  
As never to fall back to peace again  
Where no peace is—nor rest from strife and prayers,  
But tread firm-footed up the thorny way,  
Till all that spring of art and joy is theirs  
Whereof they taste so small a draught to-day.

To His Daughter

I BOUGHT you flowers on Ludgate Hill,  
Dear violets in December,  
And all the way to Charing Cross  
They whispered of the rain-wet moss,  
The budding briars, the April days,  
The pageant of the woodland ways,  
And all the pleasant plots and plays  
That you and I remember.

## Spring

71

I met you on the platform chill  
Where winter winds were snarling ;  
Your smile that lit that gloomy place  
Lit up for me that other face  
Of her who sold the violets—mean,  
Poor, broken, desolate, unclean :  
A ruined slave, who might have been  
A Queen like you, my darling.

## Spring

'THE spring is here !' the primrose says ;  
The birds exult—'The spring is here !'  
A veil of buds, desired and dear,  
Is thrown across the lengthening days.

The furrowed field that was so brown  
Is faintly gray with wet green spears,  
Which shall be fruitful wheaten ears,  
The golden autumn's golden crown.

The sticky chestnut-buds unfold,  
The almond-blossom pinkly gleams ;  
The freshness of our childhood's dreams  
Is on the moor, the wood, the wold.

The fat, blithe blackbirds on the lawn  
Rejoice to see the grass grown green ;  
And starlings, where the thatched roofs lean,  
Chatter in gray and windy dawn.

## The Better Part

And spring is here—but with the spring  
 Come bitter winds, and cold, cold showers :  
 Will these not slay the wakening flowers  
 And stay the buds from blossoming ?

No—in despite of wind and rain,  
 The year will add to flowers new flowers,  
 Till summer comes with burning hours,  
 And all the roses live again.

And we—no chill that time can bring,  
 No icy wind of worldly scorn,  
 Shall ever make our souls forlorn  
 Of this sweet promise of the spring !

No cold, nor rain, nor wind is strong  
 To slay Hope's seed our hearts within ;  
 Freedom, we know, at last shall win,  
 Though Tyranny endures so long !

## The Better Part

'TIS weary treading every day  
 The same dull, dreary, uphill way,  
 While the desired and the divine  
 So fair and far above us shine—  
 As unattainable as dear  
 To us who grope and stumble here.

## The Better Part

73

'Tis hard to hold our flag on high,  
And never faint, until we die—  
To spread our banner on a wind  
Scented with garlands left behind :  
To give up all life's joy, that we  
May humble banner-bearers be.

'Tis hard to sing, in faith, of light  
Through endless seeming hours of night—  
To tune the harp, the voice upraise  
For Freedom's sake, for Honour's praise—  
To sing of good that *is*, not *seems*—  
To sing of duties, not of dreams.

'Tis hard to fix one's sleepy eyes  
On faint, faint streaks of new sunrise,  
When all one's being yearns to weep  
Its tiredness out, and turn to sleep :  
Sleep and forget, and cease to care  
If sunrise be, if darkness were.

'Tis weary fighting all one's life  
In one long, bitter, desperate strife,  
The hydra-headed, rampant wrong,  
When one is fain of dance and song—  
To smell the rose, and hear the fair  
Soft wings of Pleasure in the air.

Yet would we choose the weary way,  
The fighting, not the feasting day—  
To wear the armour, not the flowers,  
To sing of Truth while voice is ours ;  
Because good fight's worst wounds are far  
More dear than any pleasures are.

## The Soul to the Ideal

I WILL not hear thy music sweet !  
 If I should listen, then I know  
 I should no more know friend from foe,  
 But follow thy capricious feet—  
 Thy wings, than mine so much more fleet—  
     I will not go !

I will not go away ! Away  
 From reeds and pool why should I go  
 To where sun burns, and hot winds blow ?  
 Here sleeps cool twilight all the day ;  
 Do I not love thy tune ? No, no !  
     I will not say !

I will not say I love thy tune ;  
 I do not know if so it be ;  
 It surely is enough for me  
 To know I love cool rest at noon,  
 Spread thy bright wings—ah, go—go soon !  
     I will not see !

I will not see thy gleaming wings,  
 I will not hear thy music clear.  
 It is not love I feel, but fear ;  
 I love the song the marsh-frog sings,  
 But thine, which after-sorrow brings,  
     I will not hear !

## Prayer Under Gray Skies 75

### Prayer Under Gray Skies

O GOD, let there be rain !  
Rain, till this sky of gray  
That covers us every day  
Be utterly wept away,  
Let there be rain, we pray,  
Till the sky be washed blue again  
Let there be rain !

O God, let there be rain,  
For the sky hangs heavy with pain,  
And we, who walk upon earth,  
We find our days not of worth ;  
None blesses the day of our birth,  
We question of death's day in vain,—  
Let there be rain.

O God, let there be rain  
Till the full-fed earth complain.  
Yea, though it sweep away  
The seeds sown yesterday  
And beat down the blossoms of May  
And ruin the border gay :  
In storm let this gray noon wane,  
Let there be rain !

O God, let there be rain  
Till the rivers rise a-main !  
Though the waters go over us quite  
And cover us up from the light  
And whelm us away in the night  
And the flowers of our life be slain,  
O God, let there be rain !



## In Trouble

O God, let there be rain,  
 Out of the gray sky, rain!  
 To wash the earth and to wash the sky  
 And the sick, sad souls of the folk who sigh  
 In the gray of a sordid satiety.  
 Open Thy flood-gates, O God most High,  
 And some day send us the sun again.  
 O God, let there be rain!

## In Trouble

**I**T'S all for nothing : I've lost im now.  
 I suppose it ad to be:  
 But oh I never thought it of im,  
 Nor e never thought it of me.  
 And all for a kiss on your evening out  
 An a field where the grass was down . . .  
 And e as gone to God-knows-where,  
 And I may go on the town.

The worst of all was the thing e said  
 The night that e went away:  
 He said e'd a married me right enough  
 If I adn't a been so gay.  
 Me, gay! When I'd cried, and I'd asked him not,  
 But e said e loved me so;  
 An whatever e wanted seemed right to me . . .  
 An how was a girl to know?

Well, the river is deep, and drowned folk sleep sound,  
 An it might be the best to do;  
 But when he made me a light-o-love  
 He made me a mother too.

## Inasmuch as ye did it not 77

I've ad enough sin to last my time,  
If twas sin as I got it by,  
But it aint no sin to stand by his kid  
An work for it till I die.

But oh the long days and the death-long nights  
When I feel it move and turn,  
And cry alone in my single bed  
And count what a girl can earn  
To buy the baby the bits of things  
He ought to a bought, by rights ;  
And wonder whether e thinks of Us . . .  
And if e sleeps sound o' nights.

### Inasmuch as ye did it not . . .

**I**F Christ should come to London,  
Come to London to-day,  
He would not go to the West End,  
He would come down our way.  
He'd talk with the children dancing  
To the organ out in the street,  
And say He was their big Brother,  
And give them something to eat.

He wouldn't go to the mansions  
Where the charitable live,  
He'd come to the tenement houses  
Where we ain't got nothing to give ;  
He'd come so kind and so homely  
And treat us to beer and bread,  
And tell us how we ought to behave ;  
And we would mind what He said.

## 78 Inasmuch as ye did it not

In the bright warm West End churches  
They sing and preach and pray ;  
They call us 'Belovèd Brethren !'  
But they do not act that way.  
And when He come to the church door,  
He'd call out bold and free :  
'You stop that preaching and praying  
And show what you've done for Me.'

Then they'd say 'Oh Lord, we have given  
To the poor both blankets and tracts,  
And we've tried to make them sober,  
And we've tried to teach them facts.  
But they will sneak round to the drink-shop ;  
They pawn the blankets for beer ;  
And we find them very ungrateful,  
But still we persevere.'

Then He would say 'I told you  
The time I was here before  
That you were all of you brothers,  
All you, that I suffered for.  
I won't go into your churches,  
I'll stop in the sun outside ;  
You bring out the men, your brothers,  
The men for whom I died !'

Out of our lousy lodgings,  
From arches and doorways about,  
They'd have to do what He told them,  
They'd have to call us out ;  
Millions and millions and millions,  
Thick and crawling like flies,  
We should creep out to the sunshine  
And not be afraid of His eyes.

## Inasmuch as ye did it not 79

He'd see what God's image looks like,  
When men have dealt with the same,  
Wrinkled with work that is never done,  
Swollen and dirty with shame ;  
He'd see on the children's foreheads  
The branded gutter-sign,  
That marks the girls to be harlots,  
That dooms the boys to be swine.

Then He'd say ' What's the good of your churches,  
When these have nowhere to sleep ?  
How can I hear your praying  
When they are cursing so deep ?  
I gave My blood and My body  
That all should have bread and wine ;  
And you have taken your share,—and theirs—  
Of these good gifts of Mine.'

Then some of the rich would be sorry,  
And all would be very scared,  
And they'd say ' But we never knew, Lord !'  
And He'd say ' Ye never cared !'  
And some would be sick and shameful  
Because they'd know that they knew,  
But the best would say ' We were wrong, Lord :  
Tell us what we can do !'

I think He'd be sitting, likely,  
For some one 'ud bring Him a chair,  
With a common kid cuddled up on His knee,  
And the common sun on His hair ;  
And they'd be standing before Him,  
And He'd say ' You know, and you knew ;  
You ought to work for your brothers,  
The same as I worked for you.

## 80 Inasmuch as ye did it not

‘For, since you’re all of you brothers,  
It’s clear as the blessed sun  
That each must work for the others,  
Not thousands work for one.  
And the ones that have lived bone-idle,  
If they want Me to hear them pray,  
Let them go and work for their livings  
The only honest way !

‘I’ve got nothing new to tell you,  
It’s just what I always said ;  
But you’ve built their bones into churches  
And stolen their wine and bread.  
You, with My name on your forehead,  
Liar and traitor, and knave,  
You have lived on the death of your brothers,  
These, whom I died to save !’

I wish He would come and say it—  
Perhaps they’d believe it then,  
And work like men for their livings  
And let us work, like men.  
Brothers? They’ll never believe it,  
The lie on their lips is red . . .  
They’ll never believe till He comes again  
Or till We rise from the dead !



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*H. J. Farmer*

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